



Natural Archetypes in Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*

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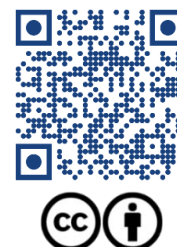
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Abstract— Henry David Thoreau, the 19th-century American transcendentalist writer, is renowned for his independent and free way of life, as well as his concise, accurate, and critical writing. His transcendentalist masterpiece, the essay collection *Walden*, contains a powerful spiritual belief that Thoreau left as an invaluable and immortal spiritual treasure for future generations. In this work, Thoreau meticulously records his experiences of passing seasons and encounters with every blade of grass and tree on the banks of Walden Pond, which contain many natural archetypal images. This paper intends to explore the cross-generational enlightenment of this work from a psychoanalytic perspective, grounded in Jung's archetype theory. It first unveils the spiritual emptiness and group confusion hidden beneath materialism, and then delves into two major natural archetypal images of “water” and “sun”, and their profound implications. Emotions linked to such archetypal experiences should be linked to positive feelings, such as purification, rebirth, enlightenment and hope. The conclusion of this paper is a summary of the redemptive significance of the work for people's empty souls, which aims to provide a new perspective for understanding the spiritual dilemmas of society.



Keywords— Henry David Thoreau; *Walden*; Natural archetypes

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Thoreau and Walden

Henry David Thoreau is a renowned American writer, philosopher, and representative of New England Transcendentalism in the 19th century. His basic idea about nature is transcendentalist. Like Emerson, Thoreau believed that nature is the creation of the universal spirit, and that nature and human spirit are interconnected. Emerson once said, "All the objects of nature are impressed upon the soul alike when it is open to their

influence" (Emerson 8). When readers follow Thoreau's footsteps into the remote wilderness, they can feel unprecedented comfort and ease. Thoreau also believed that nature could enhance people's morality, because the simplicity, purity, and beauty of nature serve as a reference point for measuring human moral nature.

The renowned classic *Walden* authored by Thoreau is considered a quintessential exemplar of American nature literature. In this work, Thoreau elaborated upon his inner yearning to reconnect with nature and the arduous process

of reconciling his inner conflicts: from discordance into harmony. During the first half of the 19th century, the United States was in the early stages of transitioning from an agricultural age to an industrial age. With the rapid development of industry and economy in capitalist society, social problems such as market monopolies, environmental pollution, and wealth disparity continued to emerge. The flourishing of industry and commerce led to the prevalence of money worship and hedonism. Under the influence of these two ideologies, accumulating wealth became the only goal in people's lives. Against this backdrop, Thoreau chose to leave the city and live in a cabin near Walden Pond. He hoped to escape the frenzy and chaos of modern society in this way, and explore the true essence and innermost depths of humanity. It was during this period that Thoreau wrote *Walden*, which was his reflection and call to the social changes of the time, as well as an exploration of human nature.

1.2 Literature Review

Thoreau and *Walden* have aroused research interests in various academic circles. The mainstream research directions include natural thought, ecological ethics, translation and dissemination, cross-cultural communication between China and the West, and literary aesthetics.

In 1965, American scholar Walter Harding dedicated his lifelong efforts to publishing "The Thoreau Handbook", a factual account of Thoreau's living conditions. Harding aimed to restore Thoreau's authentic image through these valuable documentary materials. According to Harding (1959), Thoreau chose a new way to express his true nature, thereby demonstrating his boundless love for life and nature.

Early studies focused on Henry David Thoreau's naturalistic literary thoughts. Cheng (2000) expressed Henry David Thoreau's lifelong commitment to observe and describe the facts of nature, which not only made him a saint friend of Ralph Waldo Emerson, but also an "embodiment of Concord" and an icon of American

culture today. James D. Hart (2005) pointed out that Henry David Thoreau is the first writer who advocates simple life and criticizes luxury consumption in the economic era. He is also the first philosopher who abandons the human centered ideology (662). There are also many scholars who conducted research from the perspective of ecocriticism. Liu (2016) analyzed Thoreau's *Walden* and his Earth: centeredness, and examined the relationship between humans and nature and other species from an ecological criticism perspective. Sun (2021) studied the fusion of Chinese Confucian ecological wisdom and American transcendentalist ecological thought reflected in *Walden*, as well as the enormous influence of ecological criticism on contemporary Chinese literature. Su (2022) conducted a detailed study of Thoreau's experience in natural ecology, his influence on transcendentalism, his criticism of natural ecological civilization, and the ecological ethics of the relationship between humans and nature.

However, few scholars have conducted research from the perspective of psychoanalysis to analyze the effect of archetypal images in transforming the collective unconscious during a chaotic period.

1.3 Introduction to Jung's Archetype Theory

Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) was a famous Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist who had a strong interest in philosophy and had significant influence in literature, religion, and research. He developed and reinterpreted Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic system. Jung believes that people are motivated by a more general psychological energy that pushes them to achieve psychological growth, self-realization, psychic wholeness and harmony, which is the well-known concept of collective unconscious (Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung* 288). Jung defined collective unconscious as "not acquired by individuals but rather inherited and preserved by the common psychic functioning" (Jung, *Psychological Types* 616). When the structures of the collective unconscious emerge into conscious awareness, they often adopt the images and symbols specific to an individual's culture, yet they adhere

to certain universal patterns that are discernible across all cultures. Jung designated these patterns as archetypes, regarding them as innate constituents of human consciousness.

Jung wrote, "There are as many archetypes as there are typical situations in life. Endless repetition has engraved these experiences into our psychic constitution, not in the forms of images filled with content, but at first only as forms without content, representing merely the possibility of a certain type of perception and action". (Bennet 42) Examples are symbolic elements, such as water, sun, moon, and fire.

At the level of the collective unconscious, archetypal images condense the spirit of a nation, and the psychological content of archetypes covers the understanding of nature and the universe by this nation. Not only do they determine human behavior, but they can also transform the human personality, and they can dominate it completely, control and even destroy it, because the archetype is both a factor and the motive which organizes some elements that confers a form of mental images (Adamski 564). The initial form of the archetype comes from nature, and the archetype expresses itself through various forms such as memory, dreams, illusions, and images in literature and art, and affects consciousness. When the human spirit is lost in the universe and nature, it must use archetypes to regain itself. This process is like the awakening of subconscious memory through the archetype images shaped by literary and artistic works. The passion we experience in works and the madness expressed by writers in their creative activities are all processes of the human soul searching for itself.

II. THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS

Before the Puritans set foot on the American continent, the indigenous people of this land were already able to adapt to the changes of nature according to their own preferences and abilities. The collision and impact of

glaciers and rocks created gentle and meandering rivers, which injected moisture into the soft soil and gave birth to fertile and vibrant grasslands. Hills, forests, streams, ponds, and fields witnessed the hard work of the indigenous people, and the fresh air, magnificent scenery, and abundant wildlife accompanied them all day long. The greenery and flowers of spring, the sunshine and fields of summer, the colorful harvest of autumn, and the snow and silence of winter mark the passage of time throughout the seasons, and the collection of all natural images on this land constitutes the primitive collective unconscious (Gullatz 707) .

In 1620, the Puritans arrived in Massachusetts Bay and viewed this land, which had recently experienced a large number of deaths due to disease, as sacred land, rightfully believing that it provided wonderful conditions for the development of English immigrants. The Puritans stood on the unexplored land and looked out at their new future. They were not satisfied with simple trade and wanted to possess this land. As a result, a new city rose up in the Mascotekwid Valley, and with it, the ecological economic system and way of life of the North American indigenous people were shattered by trade, currency, and prices. This was the first major trauma experienced by the collective unconscious of primitive humans, and this 'disaster from the sky' rekindled their deep-seated fears of death and the future. From then on, the terrifying legends and tragic experiences of European ancestors would be forever sealed in the racial memory of the American people, leaving a deep imprint on their psyche, and this group of Puritans called themselves the first generation of Western pioneers in American history, and then began their great journey.

Over time, the second and third generations of Puritans gradually became estranged from their ancestors' religious enthusiasm. Born in the New World, they were influenced by more secular culture and Enlightenment thinking, gradually moving away from the Puritans' initial strict religious beliefs and practices. With the development

and independence of the United States, political, social, and cultural diversity has continued to increase, and the status of religion in social life has gradually declined. Along with the progress of science and technology, the role of religion in interpreting natural phenomena and the meaning of human existence has gradually weakened as people have gained a deeper understanding of nature and the world. This trend accelerated in the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century, known as 'modernity'. At the same time, 'pragmatism' gradually gained promotion and popularity in American society, and became a driving force in the process of American modernization. Pragmatists believed that social and economic development should be based on practical needs and experiences, rather than on tradition or religious beliefs.

In the early 1840s, the United States was undergoing rapid social changes in industrialization, urbanization, and commercialization. Commercialism and materialism dominated society at that time. The Industrial Revolution gave birth to urbanization, which led to the continuous expansion of cities, the construction of factories, and the increasing stratification of society. Blind worship of money and materialism, driven by industrialization, pushed humanity into a abyss of self-loss. To cure the pathological psyche, people adopt 'consumer therapy', which is the excessive and blind consumption of material wealth. This also exacerbates the plunder of natural resources and the destruction of the external environment, stemming from people's spiritual emptiness and disorder. Thoreau explores production and consumption in the first chapter of his book, where people blindly worship the results of material civilization such as commodities. "We know but few men, a great many coats and breeches" (Thoreau 47), Thoreau wrote in *Walden*, "Dress a scarecrow in your last shift, you standing shiftless by, who would not soonest salute the scarecrow" (Thoreau 56)? This is clearly the result of the collective unconscious, and the worship of commodities is a contemporary version of

the worship of ancient gods.

III. The Archetypes in *Walden* and their Significance

3.1 The Natural Archetype of Water

Water serves as the foundation of life. Indeed, every civilization in the world, when traced back to its origin, can be seen as a civilization that originated from water. Without "water," neither human life nor society could exist. For any ethnicity, the concept of "water" is often laden with symbolic significance, frequently appearing in various ancient classics. When "water" is incorporated into artistic works imbued with primitive cultural value, it fully showcases its unique idealistic and emotional attributes, transcending the uniformity of natural objects. In human being's utterance system, the image of "water" already exceeds its ordinary natural meaning and becomes a kind of prototype with complicated deep intrinsic embodiment.

3.1.1 Historical Transmutation of the Archetype of Water

The manifestations of the water archetype in literature can be divided into the native forms and the subsequently generated forms. The native forms mainly represent the external manifestation of ancient humans' initial cognition and psychological experience of water, including chaos and floods (Yang and Yan 33). The subsequently generated forms evolve continuously from the water archetype as human civilization progresses, manifesting in literature in various forms such as rivers, lakes, springs, rain, and dew. As a collective representation, the water archetype first appeared in Chinese literature in the form of chaos, and subsequently displayed its prominence through flood myths. With the development of literature, it has flowed through the beds of Confucian and Taoist cultures in China, infiltrating deep into the fertile soil of Chinese thought, and has become an archetype imagery laden with rich national cultural implications. It has repeatedly emerged throughout history, giving form to countless typical experiences of our ancestors.

Confucius has a famous saying: "The wise man

delights in water, and the benevolent man delights in mountains" (Wu 81). Water not only has various natural forms, but also can wash off the dirt of people's body and mind, so as to make people maintain physical and mental clean and purity. Moreover, the natural shapes and functions of water often give the wise some enlightenment and inspiration to know the society, the life, and even the entire physical world.

Water, as the world main body image, also appears in the Taoism philosophy. Lao-Tzu tells us explicitly: "The highest good is like that of water. The goodness of water is that it benefits the ten thousand creatures; yet itself does not scramble, but is content with the places that all men disdain" (Waley 17). Lao-Tzu once mentioned such water images as the water, the nectar, the waterfalls, the rivers and the seas.

Expanding upon Laozi's insights, Zhuangzi further elevated the characteristics of "water" — its conformity to the nature of things, its unstoppable force, and its ability to conquer all obstacles — into a "Dao" of life. Zhuangzi broadened the scope of concrete metaphorical representations of the "Dao," internalizing the objective "Dao" into a chaotic state of enlightenment. In his philosophy, "water" serves not only as a physical metaphor but also as a spiritual guide, illustrating how one should navigate through life with fluidity and adaptability.

To sum up, in the ancients' eyes, the water already became a kind of spiritual comfort and sustenance through which people released all sorts of sorrowful pain and soul anxiety. At the same time, through water, people also reposed their all sorts of nice desires, purified the minds of self, and enabled the souls to obtain the naturalization. In this way, the water image is a carrier of emotion through which people enable the painful life to continue from generation to generation tenaciously. At the same time, the water image also incarnates a pursuit of life and a philosophical sublimation.

3.1.2 Significance of 'Water': Purification and Rebirth

In Thoreau's eyes, lakes were like immense and untainted crystals, akin to precious gems and diamonds, pure without any impurities. The clear, flowing water not only brought him greater joy in enjoying the leisurely life at *Walden* but also allowed readers to more profoundly appreciate the purity of his inner world, devoid of any clutter.

Thoreau mentioned the archetype of 'lake' many times in *Walden*. He highly praised the depth, clarity and purity of the lake water, "They are too pure to have a market value; they contain no muck. How much more beautiful than our lives, how much more transparent than our characters, are they" (Thoreau 187)! The humble beauty of this lake, secluded from the world, far removed from the market, represent Thoreau's ideal of the innocence and spirituality that humans ought to possess. Thoreau also pointed out that "Nations come and go without defiling it. It is a mirror which no stone can crack, whose quicksilver will never wear off, whose gilding Nature continually repairs; no storms, no dust, can dim its surface ever fresh; —a mirror in which all impurity presented to it sinks, swept and dusted by the sun's hazy brush—this the light dust: cloth—which retains no breath that is breathed on it" (Thoreau 177). In this description, we can see that the lake water is not only pure and transparent in itself, but also no nation can 'defile' it, and it can make any 'impurities' that fall into it precipitate and purify without leaving any trace. Therefore, *Walden Lake* is regarded by Thoreau as a 'perfect mirror'.

Thoreau elucidates the influence of the nature on one's temperament, illustrating how a small lake can reflect one's inner soul. Thoreau wrote, "If he is surrounded by mountainous circumstances, an Achillean shore, whose peaks overshadow and are reflected in his bosom, they suggest a corresponding depth in him. But a low and smooth shore proves him shallow on that side. In our bodies, a bold projecting brow falls off to and indicates a corresponding depth of thought (Thoreau 269)." Sociologists and anthropologists have already confirmed

to us the impact of social and regional environments on individuals. Through his detailed descriptions of *Walden*, Thoreau specifically expresses his views on human nature. To some extent, Thoreau's longing for *Walden Pond* reflects his aspiration for the depth and breadth of human nature.

In the Chapter 《The Pond in Winter》, Thoreau described the process of a hundred Irishmen coming from Cambridge to *Walden* to get out the ice in the winter of 1846-1847. They divided it into cakes by methods too well known to require description, and these, being sledded to the shore, were rapidly hauled off to an ice platform. The behavior of the ice cutters symbolizes humanity's exploitation of nature. In response, Thoreau sharply criticized, “But in order to cover each one of his dollars with another, he took off the only coat, ay, the skin itself, of *Walden Pond* in the midst of a hard winter.” (Thoreau 276) In the first half of the 19th century, humanity's relentless and greedy pursuit of wealth and money led to the excessive exploitation and occupation of limited natural resources, causing unprecedented destruction and pollution to the natural environment. Through the criticism of the Irish ice-cutting practice, Thoreau warned the contemporary society that any attempt to plunder or conquer nature is futile, as nature possesses far greater power than humans could anticipate. The ruthless exploitation of *Walden Pond* by ice-cutters stands in stark contrast to the poetic imagery Thoreau ascribes to it. From Thoreau's perspective, the ice blocks are the embodiment of nature's spirituality and beauty. They offer enlightenment, purify one's soul, and enable one to find eternity in nature.

In addition to its purifying function, water also sustains life and represents rebirth. In the Christian baptismal rite, these two ideas are combined: on the one hand, baptismal water symbolizes the washing away of original sin, and on the other hand, it symbolizes the spiritual rebirth that is about to begin (Wheelwright 228). Jesus Christ in the Bible is resurrected and reborn

spiritually through baptism in the Jordan River. Rebirth signifies redemption, a meaning particularly highlighted by the phrase “living water” mentioned in Jesus' sermon to the Samaritan woman at the well. This water, originating from a spring and flowing along its natural course, represents a continuous self-renewal, an endless river.

In *Walden*, Thoreau purified his soul through the act of bathing. He never concerned himself with the possibility of catching a chill, disregarding the physical intrusion of the icy water upon his flesh. In the passage describing bathing in the lake, he wrote, “Every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence, with Nature herself. I have been as sincere a worshipper of Aurora as the Greeks. I got up early and bathed in the pond; that was a religious exercise, and one of the best things which I did” (Thoreau 82). Thoreau regarded bathing in the lake as a religious purification ritual and acknowledged the lake's function of purifying the body and mind. It can be illustrated that the archetype image of ‘water’ in *Walden* symbolizes purification as well as new life. Combining Thoreau's life, influenced by his mother, who taught him to memorize many passages of the Bible at the age of eight, with the baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan River, we can boldly speculate that Thoreau's description of bathing in the lake is intentional. When humanity deviates from the origin of life and is constantly eroded and ravaged by materialism, people should return to the origin of life to examine its current state of existence. Thoreau withdrew from the materialistic industrial society and, through bathing in the lake, washed away the vulgarity of material society, achieved a spiritual baptism of ‘daily renewal, day by day’, and was subsequently purified and reborn spiritually and mentally. The lake water not only washes away the dirt of the world, but also plays a role in cleansing the spirit. Thoreau thus held onto a clear and pure spiritual home.

3.2 The Natural Archetype of the Sun

When exploring archetypes and their attributes, seeking them from the most authentic nature is an effective

method. "Mythologists continue to draw upon concepts such as the sun, moon, meteorology, botany, and related notions" (Jung, *The Selected Works of C.G.Jung* 41). This is because only in these original natural creations can they uncover the primordial forms of archetypes, thereby facilitating their classification and study. The archetype image of the 'sun' can be transformed and substituted with other images such as 'light' and 'fire'. Across the extensive history of cultural accumulation, the archetype of the 'sun' has been endowed with rich cultural connotations. It can symbolize warmth, wisdom, power, fatherhood, and can also metaphorically represent illumination, hope, and enlightenment.

3.2.1 Historical Transmutation of the Archetype of the Sun

As one of the natural objects most closely related to human existence, the sun has arisen the ancestors' curiosity and exploration. The sun therein embodies itself in different human civilization, from the abstract designs of rock art to the majestic pyramids of Egypt, and from deities enthroned upon altars to the poetic sunsets captured by literati and poets. Thinkers, philosophers, artists of successive era have all illustrated the sun in a variety of art forms with great enthusiasm, thus the prototype image of sun comes into existence with rich content and profound connotation.

In ancient times, humans existed in a state of extreme barbarism, knowing nothing about the world they inhabited. The primary characteristic of primitive thinking is 'animism,' which posits that all things in the universe possess life. The sun, moon, stars, thunder, lightning, wind, clouds, and trees, like humans, each have their own souls and thoughts and emotions, and all things operate according to their own fixed rules. Guided by this way of thinking, primitive humans created brilliant and magnificent myths. Their worship of the sun established the foundation for the emergence of the sun's archetypal imagery. Consequently, this led to an inevitable mythologization of the sun at the beginning of its existence

(Gao 20). Moreover, the sun's unique aesthetic attributes have caused its imagery to evolve and acquire a multitude of broader meanings within human imagination, permeating through a variety of artistic expressions and forms.

In the aftermath of the primitive disintegration of natural worships and emergence of the hierarchy society, the personified characteristics of the sun's archetypal imagery has become increasingly prominent. The perception that "among the gods of heaven, the sun is supreme" shared an isomorphic relationship with the autocratic status of monarchs, causing "emperors" and "power" to become one of the primary imageries of "the sun." Over subsequent extended periods, this gradually transformed into a deep-seated national collective unconsciousness, which was continually inherited and innovated by later generations, giving rise to a series of related imageries and imagery clusters.

Human's understanding of the sun has undergone a process from simplicity to complexity. With the growth of the human understanding, the ways in which we comprehend nature are continually evolving and diversifying. Examining the historical formation and evolution of the sun image, it is not difficult to observe that the sun, being closely related to human existence, has gradually accumulated human life experiences and spiritual pursuits through this intense dependency. Through the transmission of history and culture, these accumulations have settled into the collective unconscious of humanity, forming a classic archetypal imagery. Furthermore, humans continuously use their increasingly developed brains to ponder the relationship between the sun and human survival and development through practical activities. From mythological, religious, and scientific perspectives, humans constantly recognize, utilize, and conquer their objects of study. Simultaneously, they employ artistic and aesthetic imagination to shape and symbolize these objects, thereby expressing the grand ideal of harmony between humans and nature.

3.2.2 Significance of 'Sun': Enlightenment and Hope

Thoreau used the bright sun hanging high above the earth as an image to guide the lost and awaken people's hearts. The archetype image of the 'sun' mainly appears in the beginning and the end. In the chapter *«Economy»*, Thoreau mentioned that "From the desperate city you go into the desperate country, and have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrats. A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind. There is no play in them, for this comes after work. But it is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things. When we consider what, to use the words of the catechism, is the chief end of man, and what are the true necessities and means of life, it appears as if men had deliberately chosen the common mode of living because they preferred it to any other. Yet they honestly think there is no choice left. But alert and healthy natures remember that the sun rose clear. It is never too late to give up our prejudices" (Thoreau 6). This sentence reveals that while most people lead a despairing, mechanical life, sensitive and healthy individuals can cast aside prejudices and choose a different path for their lives, just as the sun shines on the earth, bringing different vitality to everything. Starting from the legend of Kua Fu chasing the sun, the imagination of racing against the sun expresses humanity's proactive attitude towards conquering and overcoming nature. Consequently, the imagery of the sun naturally became an object of human conquest and an important symbol of humanity's active spirit of exploration. Here, Thoreau attempts to bring new hope to those lost in material desires through the archetype image of the 'sun', and to awaken numb human hearts and guide lost people to the right path.

In *«Where I lived, and what I lived for»*, Thoreau celebrated the "twilight and dawn" before sunrise, and believed that "All memorable events transpire in morning time and in a morning atmosphere" (Thoreau 83). The Vedas say, "All intelligences awake with the morning. "Poetry and art, and the fairest and most memorable of the actions

of men, date from such an hour. All poets and heroes, like Memnon, are the children of Aurora, and emit their music at sunrise. To him whose elastic and vigorous thought keeps pace with the sun, the day is a perpetual morning. It matters not what the clocks say or the attitudes and labors of men." This implicitly conveys Thoreau's life goals, "The present was my next experiment of this kind, which I purpose to describe more at length, for convenience putting the experience of two years into one. As I have said, I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up" (Thoreau 78). Here, the sun and dawn are not merely confined to being natural beauties; they also symbolize the potential for humans to find or return to a wonderful and noble life. These natural phenomena serve as metaphors, reminding us of the pursuit of a simpler, purer, and more fulfilling existence, transcending material desires and embracing the essence of life.

At the end of the work, Thoreau tells an intriguing story. A strong and beautiful bug was trapped inside a farmer's kitchen for sixty years. After being exposed to hot vapor, it finally hatched into a strong and beautiful creature. Who does not feel his faith in a resurrection and immortality strengthened by hearing of this (Thoreau 312)? If a tiny insect bug can break out of the predicament through perseverance and hard work, then as human beings, we can also transform into perfect new lives as long as we remain steadfast in our beliefs, maintain hope, and persist in our efforts. In the last paragraph of the work, Thoreau wrote meaningfully, "Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star" (Thoreau 213). The 'sun' archetypal symbol reappears here, representing eternal hope and enlightenment for ignorant and numb souls. It serves as a call for American people to awaken, urging them to embrace the possibilities of each new day, recognizing that the journey towards enlightenment and self-realization is a continuous and ever-evolving process.

IV. CONCLUSION

Walden is an enduring masterpiece written by Thoreau during his period of contemplation by Walden Lake, permeated with the spirit of transcendentalism, whose influence has persisted to this day. In "Walden," the archetypal images from ancient times constitute Thoreau's psychological value system. The two archetypes of "water" and "sun," although seemingly independent, are intricately woven into the fabric of the work, creating a cohesive and profound exploration of themes. The image of "water" symbolizes Thoreau's spiritual purification and rebirth after withdrawing from industrial society. The imagery of "sun" represents enlightenment and hope. Through these two prototypical imageries, Thoreau points out a way out for both contemporary people and confused modern individuals: instead of indulging in the pursuit of material possessions, one should enrich one's spiritual world to the fullest extent. This is also the social and practical significance of "Walden" to this day.

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